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# Democracy & Education

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## Reconstituting Teacher Education

Toward Wholeness in an Era of Monumental Challenges

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### Abstract

Speaking to the political and social upheaval of our present moment, and drawing on discourses of democratic education, we argue that the U.S.'s racial reckoning propelled by recent events constitutes a sort of "founding" for our democracy and that this founding has important implications for reconfiguring citizenship within institutions and practices of teacher education. In building this argument, we articulate the aims of teacher education in a democracy and expand upon political scientist Danielle Allen's theoretical concepts of "sacrifice," "reconstitution," and "wholeness," demonstrating their urgent utility within our "thinning" democracy (Hess & McAvoy, 2015). We then draw on relevant literature to examine how teacher education fits into this larger political landscape, and we identify three monumental challenges within the field. Finally, we offer a way forward for teacher education, one grounded in democratic principles and centered on Allen's conceptualization of wholeness.

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Our participation in assorted institutions, like our choices about what to read and watch and how to speak about ourselves, shapes our political world. Insofar as a commitment to political friendship might change our institutions and our communal narratives, it would also transform our politics. (Allen, 2004, p. 169)

**I**N THE SUMMER of 2020, as the coronavirus pandemic upended life across the globe, millions across the United States participated in marches for racial justice, spurred on by the horrific killing of George Floyd at the hands of four Minneapolis police officers. In addition to demanding systemic changes to law enforcement funding and oversight, protesters also

raised concerns about the legacy of structural racism in the United States, most visibly evident in the countless monuments found throughout the country that glorify enslavers and the Confederacy. As *New York Times* columnist Jamelle Bouie (2020) described the widespread efforts to remove these monuments, "Born of grief and anger, they're an attempt to turn the country off the path to ruin."

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And part of this is necessarily a struggle over our symbols and our public space.” As critical teacher educators, we view these events as not separate from, but inherently connected to, the preparation of teachers who serve in public schools. We contend that public education cannot be separated from the circumstances in which it occurs, and, accordingly, neither can teacher education.

Indeed, the field of teacher education is awash in “culture wars” that echo the debates we hear within the public sphere: Should education—and our government more broadly—function more or less like a business? Are teachers practical technicians, or does such a focus on replicable technique marginalize the pursuit of justice? (e.g., Philip et al., 2019). And to what extent can public education, as an instrument of a nation-state birthed from white supremacist ideology, break the “bones” of the caste system (Wilkerson, 2020) in which it exists? “Put bluntly,” wrote Juárez & Hayes (2015), “the ‘big house’ of teacher education is on fire and burning brightly” (p. 318). However, amid these flames we observe a unique opportunity for teacher education, one that arises not in spite of sociopolitical upheaval but precisely because of it. In this conceptual article, we weave together the discourses of democratic education and teacher preparation to argue that our pitched political moment demands that we fundamentally refashion the aims and practices of teacher education toward humanizing ends.

When imagining what is possible in this profound moment of reckoning and rupture, we draw on political philosopher Danielle Allen’s scholarship. Allen (2004) argued that the United States does not simply have one founding but rather many, including women’s suffrage in the early 20th century and the integration of Central High School in Little Rock, Arkansas in 1957. Each of these foundings offers a chance for reconstitution, as foundings change the way that we both relate to and imagine each other as citizens. They rearrange old configurations of citizenship, including the ways in which we sacrifice for and develop trust in one another. In this essay, we argue that the country’s racial reckoning propelled by the events of 2020 does not only constitute another founding for this country, but that it also has important implications reconfiguring citizenship—especially as it relates to sacrifice and trust—within institutions and practices of teacher education.

In recasting our present moment as one such founding, we turn to teacher education and identify three monumental challenges composed of widespread practices, procedures, and orientations in the field, that serve as barriers to educational justice. These challenges are ones that naturalize and uphold whiteness, exalt a narrow definition of “teacher educator,” reward white, middle-class privileges and sensibilities with unfettered entry into the profession, and preserve the “oneness” of teacher education at the expense of an inclusive, multifaceted “wholeness” (Allen, 2004). In building this argument, we first articulate the aims of public [teacher] education in a democracy, and expand upon Allen’s theoretical concepts of political friendship, sacrifice, reconstitution, and wholeness, demonstrating their urgent utility within our “thinning” democracy (Hess & McAvoy, 2015). We then draw on relevant literature to examine how teacher education fits into this larger political landscape, and we identify monumental

challenges within teacher education. Finally, we offer a way forward for teacher education, one grounded in democratic principles and centered on Allen’s conceptualization of “wholeness.” In so doing, we aim to pave the way for a reconstitution of teacher education toward democratic ends.

## Toward a Democratic Ideal in Teacher Education

### *Democracy in the “Tip”*

Dahl (1998) identified five basic criteria for democracy: effective participation, equality in voting, gaining enlightened understanding, exercising final control over the agenda, and the inclusion of all. Each of these is requisite if a citizen is to have political equality, the cornerstone of democracy. Dahl traced the conception of political equality to the ideal moral judgment of intrinsic equality, meaning “one’s life, liberty, and happiness is not intrinsically superior or inferior to the life, liberty, and happiness of any other” (p. 65). Thus, while a large modern democracy logistically requires representation of citizens by elected delegates and the conferring of power to people to whom citizens entrust decision-making and policy creation, the core principle behind democracy is that each citizen is intrinsically equal, and therefore politically equal. While political equality is a nonnegotiable component of democracy, forces like market capitalism compromise the ways that certain classes of people are able to actualize and enjoy it; however, it is through the creation and sustenance of democratic institutions, like schools, and the encouragement of citizens’ broad participation that effective participation and enlightened understanding are energized for all citizens, thus rendering democracy more expansive, more robust, and more inclusive.

Complicating this ideal are several factors that contribute to the turbulence of our times. With this new era has come a set of new logics that depart in important ways from previous periods in time. Political polarization, income inequality (driven in part by deregulation, wealth hoarding, and neoliberal logics), the increasingly unclear line between fake and real news are just some of the more recent trends that have scholars and thinkers concerned. For example, Hess and McAvoy (2015) described the “thinning” of democracy, which, when combined with the political polarization of our day, yields a particularly toxic outcome:

*The current era of polarization is not just a thin version of democracy; it undermines democracy. A thin democracy may demand less from citizens but nevertheless could be effective at addressing social problems if elected officials are able to work together. A thin and polarized democracy becomes trapped in a partisan feud that exacerbates social problems. (p.27)*

Moreover, evidence suggests that Western democracy, increasingly thin and polarized, is no longer accepted as practically and morally superior to other forms of government. A recent study by Foa and Mounk (2016) suggested that

*citizens in a number of supposedly consolidated democracies in North America and Western Europe . . . have also become more cynical about the value of democracy as a political system, less hopeful*

that anything they do might influence public policy, and more willing to express support for authoritarian alternatives (p. 7).

By virtue of our thin, polarized democracy, set amid an international trend toward authoritarianism, U.S. democracy is currently “in the tip” (Hess, 2009; Hess & McAvoy, 2015), in that its value is being openly questioned.

Alarming as this new reality is, public schools have a key role to play in reversing course. Public schools, after all, are vital institutions within our democratic society and are therefore tasked with helping the students who attend those schools to practice and learn the kinds of dispositions and skills that will prepare them to participate effectively and thoughtfully in civic life (Gutmann, 1986/1999; Hess, 2009; Westheimer & Kahne, 2004; Apple & Beane, 2007).

Such an emphasis on democratic education would necessarily involve students in deliberating “the contested meaning of democracy” and should teach students that “a dynamic democracy is capable of both great progress and stunning defeats” (Hess, 2008, p. 373). In the following section, we employ Allen’s theoretical concepts of political friendship, sacrifice, reconstitution, and wholeness as we seek to link this democratic imperative for schools to the field of teacher education.

### **Reconstituting Teacher Education**

In *Talking to Strangers: Anxieties of Citizenship since Brown v. Board of Education*, Allen (2004) contends that the age-old warning given to children, “Don’t talk to strangers,” and the foundational mistrust of others that the phrase encompasses, has exacerbated political polarization as well as deepened interracial distrust. Rather than encountering difference as one would through regular engagement with “strangers”—and crucially, learning to work collaboratively with these strangers to solve problems—citizens instead retreat into the safety of the familiar. Allen argues that this issue is borne out in public schools, but we propose that it is also endemic to teacher education. As such, three of Allen’s concepts are instructive for our collective work.

#### **Reconstitution**

Allen (2004) offers a novel definition of constitution that serves as our foundational concept for reconstituting teacher education. Allen writes, “A constitution is more than paper; it is a plan for constituting political rights and organizing citizenship, for determining who has access to the powers of collective decision making that are used to negotiate a community’s economic and social relations” (p. 6). Allen argues that if we are to take “constitution” in the broad sense, then our country has several foundings: after the Civil War when constitutional amendments began to “federalize control over voting rights” (p. 6); Reconstruction, which created universal white male suffrage (not just those who owned property), prohibited slavery, and granted newly freed African Americans with citizenship and voting rights; the 1876 Hayes-Tilden Agreement, which discontinued the presence of federal troops in the South, giving “white Southerners free rein to employ extralegal violence to redraw the basic parameters of political and civil rights” (p. 6); women’s suffrage; *Brown v. Board*

of Education in 1954; the integration of Central High School in Little Rock in 1957; the Voting Rights Act of 1965; and the lowering of the voting age from 21 to 18 in 1971. In these moments of “reconstitution,” Allen argues, we bear witness to

*a democracy coming apart and trying to put itself together again. And to see a democracy in a moment of unknitting and reweaving is to have the chance to learn things about the inner workings of democracy that we do not normally see. (p. 24)*

We argue here that our nation is currently in a moment of reconstitution, marked by the national outcry over police brutality, inhumane immigration practices and policies, and an uncontrolled pandemic. This means that a fundamental reexamination of all our democratic institutions is necessary. Although reconstitution implies a loss of what once was, Allen has reminded us that it is fundamentally “an opportunity for weaving a new social fabric in which to clothe ourselves” (p. 24). If we view teacher education itself as being in a moment of reconstitution, what sort of fabric shall we use to remake ourselves?

This question strikes the core of teacher education and requires that we fully engage the political nature of our work. Cochran-Smith (2004), in noting that teacher education is a political—rather than a policy—issue, contends

*... the purpose of education in a democratic society is not simply assimilating all schoolchildren into the mainstream or preparing the nation’s workforce to preserve the place of the United States as the dominant power in a global society. . . . How to prepare teachers to foster democratic values and skills must be acknowledged as a major part of the “problem of teacher education” if we are to maintain a healthy democracy. (p. 298)*

Critical scholars in teacher education have long understood that preparing all teachers (regardless of content area or grade level) to advance democratic practices and orientations is a crucial part of helping to strengthen and sustain democracy writ large (e.g., Carr, 2008, 2013; Parker, 2006). However, Allen (2004) advocates for the importance of an organizing metaphor in moments of reconstitution, such that the goals of these projects are more clearly communicated:

*Metaphors, no less than institutions, are vehicles for the imagination and, indeed, are central to securing ‘the people’ for democratic life. In short, citizens can explain their role in democracy only by expending significant conceptual and imaginative labor to make themselves part of an invisible whole. (pp. 16–17)*

To this end, she offers the metaphor of wholeness as an objective for our collective work.

#### **Wholeness**

In exploring several “myths” of democratic citizenship, Allen (2004) critiques the metaphor of oneness that is often held up as an ideal of American society. *E pluribus unum* is our national motto, after all, and though “oneness” on its face seems an admirable goal, Allen cautions that “the effort to make the people ‘one’ cultivates in the citizenry a desire for homogeneity, for that is the aspiration

taught to citizens by the meaning of the word ‘one,’ itself” (p. 17). Within a metaphor of oneness, those who are not considered part of the polity are rendered politically invisible. Like all metaphors, the metaphor of oneness has implications for the habits of citizenship it encourages. Using the example of the period between the Civil War and WWII, Allen writes, “The effort to make people ‘whole’ was defined by the attempt to make it ‘one.’ . . . And the dominant practice of citizenship among those who had melted together was to uphold the idea of being one people by ignoring or even undermining the citizen status of those who had not been assimilated” (p. 18). Instead, Allen hypothesizes that a better metaphor for our citizenry is that of wholeness, a concept that, in origin, is synonymous with “full,” “total,” and “complete.” Where oneness strives to eliminate difference and, when that is not possible, to ignore or marginalize those who do not fit, “an effort to make the people ‘whole’ might cultivate an aspiration to the coherence and integrity of a consolidated but complex, intricate, and differentiated body” (p. 17).

Applying “wholeness” to teacher education prompts reflection on the “oneness” that too often prevails in our programs: Preservice teachers who fall outside the white, middle class, cisgender, able-bodied norm encounter inaccessible barriers at every stage of their journey, each carrying the implicit message that they do not fit the singular mold our programs are best equipped to recognize and affirm. “A speaker cannot use the word ‘one’ to mean multiplicity,” writes Allen (2004, p. 17), “but the word ‘whole’ entails just that.”

Further, stemming from “the particular metaphors that give force to the pursuit of wholeness come also particular *practices* that help give those metaphors recognizable and living form” (Allen, 2004, p. 17). One of the most concrete practices teacher educators can engage in is to acknowledge the historical complexity of the field itself. In teacher education, like most disciplines, amnesia is the norm. It is important to note, for example, that the metaphor of oneness continues to animate the work of teaching and teacher education and that this metaphor has historical precedent, especially in the context of the struggle for integration of schools. In his scholarship on the displacement of Black educators in the South post-*Brown*, historian Michael Fultz has documented the myriad ways that integration meant oneness when it came to the composition of teachers. From the 1950s through the 1970s,

*African American school staff at all levels—teachers, principals, coaches, counselors, band directors, even cafeteria workers—were fired, demoted, harassed, and bullied as White communities throughout the South reacted first to the prospect and then to the reality of court-ordered desegregation. No one was exempt. . . . [However, u]nder siege, the forces of southern White hegemony, the organized powers of “massive resistance”, could not completely undermine the new integration initiatives, but they certainly sought to mold the emerging “unitary” public educational system [emphasis added] in a bleached image that they preferred (Fultz, 2004, p. 14).*

As teacher educators, one concrete way to practice and encourage wholeness is to reckon with two intertwined historical truths: Education has long been a space of white supremacy, and the Black struggle for equality and voice has resisted these hegemonies for as

long as they have existed. Foregrounding these occluded histories in our programs and in our teacher education courses is one way to complicate the narrative and invite the multiplicity that undergirds the wholeness that Allen argues for. To remain in a narrative of oneness is to remain complicit in whiteness.

Practicing wholeness also means reexamining our relationships with the institutions of teacher education, whatever the label (i.e., “alternative” or “traditional”). Giroux (1988) writes:

*Teacher education institutions need to be reconceived as public spheres. Such institutions as they presently exist are damagingly bereft of social conscience and social consciousness. As a result, programs need to be developed in which prospective teachers can be educated as transformative intellectuals [emphasis added] who are able to affirm and practice the discourse of freedom and democracy. (p.159)*

There are two important points to be made here. The first relates back to Allen’s push for wholeness. For Allen, endeavoring for wholeness means that the institutions that Giroux referred to are not conceived of as separate from ourselves but rather connected to us. Allen (2004) writes,

*I ask all citizens to see themselves as founders of institutions, to whatever degree they interact regularly within institutions (churches, schools, universities, businesses, and bureaucracies) that have reach enough to affect the shape of life in their surrounding communities. If a citizen sees the institutions of which he or she is already a part as a medium in which to exemplify the citizenship of trust-building, institutional reform will already be underway. (p. xxi)*

If we are to take Allen’s invitation seriously, this means that we reconceive of the institutions where we work as ours, despite our impulses to place responsibility for practices and policies we do not like on abstract actors like “bureaucracy” or “upper administration.” More than this, she invites us to understand the institution as a space where we can enact the kinds of democratic citizenship practices that would encourage wholeness, especially trust building.

The second important point relates to Giroux’s call to prepare transformative intellectuals. If we are to do this work, then we ourselves need to be transformative intellectuals. Lowenstein (2009) offers a way forward in this work, proposing that teacher educators enact a “parallel practice” wherein teacher educators “walk the walk,” modeling the kinds of responsive and critical stances that we ask our preservice teachers to enact with their own K–12 students. The “parallel practice” we are proposing here begins with a critical examination of teacher education as a monument to be historicized, examined, and remade through practices aimed at wholeness, not oneness. This demands a radical overhaul of programmatic structures in teacher education as well a reexamination of our pedagogies (Stillman et al., 2019). Reframing our work as transformative intellectuals committed to a parallel practice requires us to leave our content area silos to engage collectively in the renewal of our vitiated democracy.

### Sacrifice and Trust

A final, key piece of Allen’s (2004) argument is the notion that democratic health is predicated on citizens’ experiences with trust

and sacrifice within the polity. Democracy requires sacrifice, as decisions will be made that will benefit some at the undue expense of others. Though some citizens are asked to sacrifice more than others, it is our duty to ensure that their needs are met regardless. The same people cannot be asked, time and time again, to do the sacrificing. Such care inspires trust, and its lack breeds distrust among the polity:

*Distrust can be overcome only when citizens manage to find methods of generating mutual benefit despite differences of position, experience, and perspective. The discovery of such methods is the central project of democracy. Majority rule is nonsensical as a principle of fairness unless it is conducted in ways that provide minorities with reasons to remain attached to the polity. The central feature of democratic politics is therefore not its broad definition of citizenship or its ultimate dependence on majority rule, but rather its commitment to preserving the allegiance of all citizens, including electoral minorities, despite majority rule. Would we join a club if we know that all of its interests would go against our own interests?*  
Allen, 2004, No. (p. xix)

This issue of trust is particularly salient when we consider the demographic divide between a majority white, monolingual teaching force and the majority nonwhite, increasingly multilingual student population they teach. If teacher education is to be reimagined, we must take seriously Allen's challenge to address the ways in which the students who come to us, along with their families and communities, trust—or don't—our commitment to disrupting whiteness in teacher education.

Applied to teacher education, Allen's (2004) concepts of reconstitution and wholeness beg critical questions related to belonging, inclusion, and participation: Who gets to participate in the work of teacher education? Who is included? Do all voices get a vote? Who sets the agenda? Further, Allen's contention that democratic citizenship requires trust and sacrifice prompts us to wonder, who, in teacher education, bears undue sacrifice and loss at the expense of trust? Such questions are even more urgent now, with our "thinning" democracy in the United States and with support for democratic forms of government on the decline globally. Thus, in seeking to walk the talk, we argue that the processes and systems involved in teacher education must mirror the democratic practices we teach our own students to enact in their future classrooms.

### Critical Reflection as Method

In their recent editorial for the *Journal of Teacher Education*, "The Critical Need for Pause in the COVID-19 Era," Richmond and colleagues (2020) explain, "We should be 'pausing' to reassess educational systems as a whole, and in the current context, to better identify what it is exactly that needs to change so we are not continuing to replicate and reproduce the same ideologies which drive the system" (p. 377). In many ways, our primary mode of inquiry is that of pausing to engage in the kind of action-reflection the authors challenge us to engage in. This pausing enables us to deeply inquire into what we see as a pressing challenge of teacher education: What are the monuments in teacher education that

need to come down? As we seek to accept our educational responsibility, we utilize critical reflection to examine our own experiences and research as teacher educators and former secondary English teachers. This mode of inquiry is not simply anecdotal or impressionistic but rather stems from an epistemological stance that envisions testimony and lived experience as a valid form of evidence and argumentation (Sanders, 1997). Based on this critical reflection, in tandem with recent literature, we argue that there are three monumental challenges in teacher preparation that ought to be approached with the aim of dismantling: gatekeeping tests; hierarchical ideologies, beliefs, and practices that exclude communities from having a say in the why and the "to what end?" of teacher preparation; and exploitative programmatic structures.

Importantly, we do not see ourselves as innocent participants within the current regime of teacher education; rather, as two cisgender women, one of us identifying as multiracial and the other as white, we see ourselves as complicit in the maintenance of the monuments that continue to symbolize the oppressive and undemocratic practices and policies that define our field. Part of this work, then, is holding ourselves accountable in working toward the profound changes to teacher education we are proposing are necessary in this moment of reconstitution.

### Teacher Education as Monument

In conceptualizing teacher education as a monument, we drew inspiration from critical scholarship in the field of museum studies. As public sites, monuments play an important role in shaping both knowledge (Hooper-Greenhill, 1992) and national identity (Johnson, 1995). Monuments help to construct and demarcate the "imagined world" of the citizenry, and debates surrounding them are proxies for larger questions of belonging (Levinson, 2018). Finally, the monument, as an extension of the nation-state, is a visual performance of power (Bennett, 1995).

In interrogating the metaphorical monuments in teacher education, we sought to identify those assumptions and practices that have largely gone unquestioned so as to seem almost part of the natural landscape. At the core of each of these monuments, inextricable from their durability, is white supremacy. Though critical scholars have long noted that teacher education is defined by "an overwhelming presence of whiteness" (Sleeter, 2001, p. 101; see also Cochran-Smith, 1995, 2000), our current moment, which has seen unprecedented attacks on historically and ethnoracially inclusive educational practices and curricula from the highest levels, has rendered this work all the more urgent. Teacher education, as a project of white supremacy, denies true democratic engagement through the maintenance of three key monuments: first, the gatekeeping function of the culture of assessment to which teacher candidates are subjected, and which disproportionately impacts candidates of color; second, the continued exclusion of families and communities from the work of preservice teacher education; and third, the myriad programmatic practices and assumptions that work to the exclusion of minoritized teacher candidates. These figurative monuments, like their physical counterparts, are not neutral expressions; rather, they are borne of political decisions, ones that dictate the borders of the figured

world of teacher education. Furthermore, in the same way that monuments reflect and construct notions of belonging and citizenship, so too do the monuments of teacher education reflect and construct particular notions of who gets to become a teacher.

### **Monumental Challenge #1: The Culture of Assessment**

First, we must reconstitute the culture of high-stakes examinations and assessments that single-handedly determine teacher candidates' eligibility for licensure, including Praxis and edTPA, which privilege test-takers from dominant racial and class backgrounds at the expense of students of color (e.g., Au, 2009; Graham, 2013; Kritt, 2004; Petchauer, 2016), thereby maintaining the whiteness of teacher education. Black test takers are 40% less likely to pass the Praxis I exam than their white counterparts (Tyler, 2011) and continue to perform far below white candidates' scores on the edTPA (Barnum, 2017). The costs of such exams alone are prohibitively expensive, ranging from \$60 to \$170 for the Praxis and approximately \$300 for the edTPA. Such fees exponentially increase for students who must take these multiple times to garner a passing score.

These assessments additionally take an understudied psychological toll on minoritized test takers. Petchauer (2016), for example, described his participant Ashley, a Black teacher candidate who, upon the suggestion of an acquaintance, identified herself as white when completing the demographic questionnaire before the Praxis exam and went on to pass the test after several failed attempts previously. Petchauer wrote,

*Causal explanations (such as luck or checking a demographic box) need not be objectively true to be influential on a person's actions. Consequently, the connections that Ashley began to make between checking the demographic box and her passing score were not insignificant. (p. 844)*

Further, the myopic drive to increase the "rigor" of program admission standards has too often come at the expense of reason. Bennett et al. (2006) critiques the illogical, though widespread, practice of requiring passing PRAXIS scores—which assesses necessary skills for entry-level teachers—of would-be preservice teachers *before* they enter a teacher education program:

*When we questioned the rationale of requiring freshman or sophomore college students to evidence such skills before being accepted by a TEP, and thus perhaps even prior to having the opportunity to access the coursework and experiences necessary to develop these skills, the response was essentially that this choice is the prerogative of the various schools and colleges of education. (p. 535)*

Seemingly nonsensical practices like this, in addition to the noted bias among these examinations, exacerbate the sociocultural chasm between a majority-white teacher work force and a majority-nonwhite population of students. In this way, "admission tests are transforming a predominantly White population of prospective teachers into an even more homogeneous group" (Bennett et al., 2006, p. 537). This is especially problematic because research demonstrates the profoundly positive impact BIPOC

teachers have on the educational achievement of minoritized students (Bristol & Goings, 2019).

One of the consequences of working from a place of oneness is the naturalization of assessment systems that marginalize and disadvantage BIPOC teachers. Salazar's (2018) recent research on teacher evaluation not only exposes the ways in which traditional teacher evaluations marginalize people from communities of color but also offers a more equitable and culturally responsive system of teacher evaluation. With colleagues at the University of Denver, Salazar has developed the Framework for Equitable and Excellent Teaching (FEET) which is grounded in Critical Race Theory (CRT). Salazar writes:

*The emergence of the FEET provokes important questions about the inherent contradictions in teacher evaluation. Does the use of traditional paradigms in teacher evaluation fortify the dominant culture and instantiate hegemonic instruments of oppression? Does moving the margins to the middle result in positioning historically marginalized communities at the center of whiteness? How do we acquiesce to the reality of teacher evaluation and continue to resist it? (p. 474)*

The tension Salazar notes between, on one hand, the data-driven realities of teacher evaluation and, on the other, the urgent need to resist such hegemonic, neoliberal practices is an urgent one that demands our immediate attention.

### **Monumental Challenge #2: The Narrow Definition of "Teacher Educator"**

Second, the epistemological monument that dictates who counts as a teacher educator must be cleared away; we can no longer assume our credentials alone enable us to adequately prepare our preservice teachers at the expense of the knowledge, experiences, and desires of local community members, students, and caregivers (Payne & Zeichner, 2017). Though efforts to more fully integrate teacher education programs and the schools and communities they nominally serve have increased in recent decades, "academic knowledge" continues to trump the local, experiential wisdom of our would-be partners (Zeichner, 2010). Bound up, too, in the hegemony of academic knowledge is the loss of language and education sovereignty (McCarty & Lee, 2014; McCarty & Nicholas, 2014; Moore, 2019). In noting the challenge of preparing teachers who are deeply committed to their students' families and communities, Zeichner et al. (2016) points out the irony "that so little of this work goes on in teacher education programs across the United States when so many of them have claimed the mantle of social justice as the basis for their work" (p. 288).

Thus, the dismantling of this monument must begin with concerted, sustained efforts to "make use of the distributed expertise between universities, schools, and communities to share the responsibility and opportunity to support the development of critically compassionate, aware, and responsive classroom practitioners" (Carter Andrews et al., p. 116). This necessarily entails a shift from merely "involving" families and communities to working alongside these partners in solidarity (Zeichner et al., 2016). In so doing, preservice teachers can come to understand

teaching as “a facet of a larger social project,” one that positions teachers and communities “as intimately yoked together” (Onore & Gilden, 2010, p. 37).

### **Monumental Challenge #3: Programmatic Barriers to Educational Justice**

Embedded within and among the monuments of assessment and academic knowledge is the programmatic monument of teacher education, that which, in its efforts to maintain order, efficiency, and ambiguous “standards,” bars many would-be teacher candidates—a pool disproportionately comprising students from minoritized communities—from successfully completing their programs. As Barnum (2017) puts it, “Virtually every step in the common teacher certification process risks disproportionately excluding prospective teachers of color.”

A major programmatic barrier is one prospective teacher candidates encounter before they are even granted entry into the program: The common requirement of a 3.0 GPA to gain admission into a teacher education program automatically excludes nearly half of Black college students and more than a third of Latinx college students (National Center for Education Statistics, 2012). It is little wonder, then, that approximately 80% of public school teachers are white (Barnum, 2017). Rather than reject these applicants out of hand, Delpit (1988) suggests an ethical alternative:

*We cannot justifiably enlist exclusionary standards when the reason this student lacked the skills demanded was poor teaching at best and institutionalized racism at worst . . . The answer is to accept students but also to take the responsibility to teach them. (pp. 291–292)*

An additional barrier—one we find to be remarkably underdiscussed—is the practice of preservice teachers contributing their unpaid labor for 40+ hours a week during the student teaching semester without the ability to maintain outside employment and at the cost of full tuition. Practices like these disadvantage preservice teachers from so-called nontraditional and working-class backgrounds who simply cannot afford the privilege of the internship experience.

For the few economically and/or ethnoracially minoritized students who clear these hurdles and enter our programs, the “unbearable whiteness of teaching” (Bonner, 2016) presents a perpetual obstacle with which they must contend. Among Haddix’s (2010) two BIPOC preservice teacher participants, for instance, she finds “no singular moment or instance when they reconciled tensions between their racial and linguistic identities and the construction of teacher identities” (p. 120). Such experiences point to the failure of teacher education programs to attend to the psychological needs of culturally and linguistically diverse preservice teachers, spurred on by the “false racist innocence” of white teacher educators (Milner, 2008, p. 336). Dodo Seriki et al. (2015) point to the intentionality of these failures at the programmatic level:

*The process of program development perpetuate[s] Whiteness as property as White academics endeavor to preserve the value of their Whiteness while devaluing Blackness; expansive commitments are*

*articulated through program development, conceptual frameworks, and the like but are often unrealized because they were never consistent with the value of Whiteness. (p. 98)*

Briefly stated, “The failure of multicultural teacher preparation is a system success, not a system failure, used to maintain White racial domination” (Juárez & Hayes, 2015, p. 324). As enacted daily in schools of teacher education, programmatic practices—even those cloaked in the language of social justice and diversity—do little to disrupt the “racial disgust” (Morales et al., 2019) embedded deeply within the U.S. caste system (Wilkerson, 2020).

Taken together, these three metaphorical monuments, which may appear as innocuous as their physical counterparts, are political testaments to the white supremacy of teacher education. As we join our fellow teacher educators in working to dismantle these monuments piece by piece, we offer in their place the conceptual metaphor of wholeness as an equitable ideal for teacher education.

### **Toward Wholeness in Teacher Education**

Allen (2004) offers the metaphor of wholeness as an alternative to oneness, a concept that excludes difference in its effort to consolidate. Where oneness strives to eliminate difference, “an effort to make the people ‘whole’ might cultivate an aspiration to the coherence and integrity of a consolidated but complex, intricate, and differentiated body” (p. 17). Applying the metaphor of wholeness to teacher education would, we argue, necessitate fundamental changes to our research, teaching, and administrative practices. This wholeness of practice requires us to move past a myopic focus on skills and toward an ideological shift in the way we conceptualize the work of teaching. Additionally, wholeness requires that we push beyond teacher-family-community involvement to solidarity and sustained collaboration (Guillen & Zeichner, 2018; Payne & Zeichner, 2018; Zeichner et al., 2016). This wholeness, which we conceive of as part and parcel of our role in building democratic professionalism in teacher education (Zeichner, 2019), is fundamentally asset oriented (Stillman et al., 2019).

Where the three monuments we’ve identified contribute to oneness through systematically eliminating difference among faculty and preservice teachers, approaching teacher education through the lens of wholeness would necessitate a sustained commitment to difference; the assumption of complexity, rather than uniformity, would form the foundation of our work. Following, we identify two areas of teacher education most in need of reframing toward wholeness: first, the conceptual and theoretical underpinnings of our field, and second, our collective praxis (Freire, 2000). Drawing on key research in these areas, we offer concrete pathways toward wholeness for teacher educators and the programs in which they work.

### **Conceptual Wholeness**

As Cochran-Smith and Zeichner (2005) call out, teacher education programs in general are marked by their lack of conceptual and theoretical grounding. We see wholeness as a fitting concept from

which our work can ethically proceed. In practical terms, wholeness urges us to work toward ensuring the demographics of our teaching population reflects those of the learner population (Picower, 2009). More philosophically, we see wholeness in conversation with calls for “hybridity” and “liminality” among universities, schools, and communities (Hill et al., 2019; Zeichner, 2010).

From a conceptual standpoint, wholeness in teacher education necessitates a reckoning with the racial repression of white folks at the expense of BIPOC’s racial oppression. As Matias (2016) contends,

*Once teacher education understands how and why whites have become culturally white, it can engage in a deeper conversation of race and racism, move beyond guilt, anger, and denial needed to become whole-heartedly antiracist . . . When this happens, white teachers can walk into urban classrooms populated with students of color and genuinely recognize the context of race, a validation that gives urban students of color a chance to speak their experiences aloud. Only until then can teacher education become a healer of abuse rather than a recycler of it. (p. 206)*

“Wholeness,” which has as its synonyms concepts like “entirety” and “integrity,” provides a theoretical grounding upon which we can remake our teacher education programs towards democratic ends.

### **Wholeness of Praxis**

We employ Freire’s (2000) notion of “praxis,” or “reflection and action directed at the structures to be transformed” (p. 127) in conceptualizing how the metaphor of wholeness might impact our daily work as teacher educators. A praxis based on wholeness, we assert, is multifaceted and expansive. It would entail much unlearning and relearning (Aronson et al., 2020) and would require that programs and practitioners resist relying on the “ideological tool of Whiteness,” as in *It’s out of my control* (Picower, 2009, p. 207), and on the “performative tool of Whiteness” that takes the shape of *We don’t talk about that* (p. 209). Instead, wholeness demands that we “develop habits of citizenship that can help a democracy bring trustful coherence out of division without erasing or suppressing difference” (Allen, 2004, p. 20).

Programmatically, we see wholeness in Picower’s (2009) call to extend support to program graduates through their first years of teaching; in Roegman and Kolman’s (2020) urging to complexify the role of the “mentor teacher” such that these valuable partners are fully treated as such; and in Bennet et al.’s (2006) practical suggestions to create multiple pathways into teacher education programs that do not solely rely on Praxis scores. Additionally, wholeness, when applied to our curricular sequencing, demands sustained attention to power, particularly along lines of race and gender, as well as critical race theory and critical whiteness studies, a task hardly feasible within the sole “diversity” class so many of our programs require (Aronson & Meyers, 2020; Bristol & Goings, 2019). Instead, emancipatory pedagogies must permeate all our courses (Rector-Aranda, 2019).

Among our teacher candidates, wholeness insists that we move beyond “teaching to the middle,” which, given demographic trends, leaves us to attend to the needs of cisgender white women to the exclusion of everyone else. Particular attention must be paid to the needs and experiences of, for example, novice, male teachers of color, who benefit from additional support in examining their “race and/or gender privilege on interactions with future colleagues” (Bristol & Goings, 2019, p. 62). Epistemologically speaking, localized, place-based, and Indigenous pedagogies, like “barrio-based pedagogies” (Irizarry & Raible, 2011); “border pedagogies” (Giroux, 1991); and “decolonizing pedagogies” (Madden, 2015), strike us as methods that move us closer to wholeness. And crucially, wholeness in teacher education requires engagement with language, given its central role within indigenous self-determination (McCarty & Nicholas, 2014), and as a “conveyor of culture” (Moore, 2019). Schools must recognize and accept their responsibility to act as agents of language reclamation (McCarty & Nicholas, 2014) and revitalization (McCarty & Lee, 2014), and as such, we teacher educators must infuse linguistically responsive practices—as well as home and Indigenous language study—in every aspect of our work.

Finally, we envision wholeness as continually holding ourselves accountable to this ideal, identifying where we inevitably fall short, and—critically—taking discrete, identifiable action to move away from “oneness.” This can and should be done through rigorous research on teacher educators (Ohito, 2019), as well as high-quality, ongoing professional development for those in our ranks (Picower, 2009). While we recognize that the monuments we’ve previously discussed are complex, ornate, and so staid that it might seem like there’s just no way to disassemble them, we propose wholeness as a symbolic goal through which we can more effectively assess our efforts to achieve educational justice.

### **Discussion**

Just as the U.S. is in a moment of reconstitution, so too is the field of teacher education. And just as recent events have brought about a reckoning with the symbols and monuments of our past, we argue that it is time to topple the exclusionary monuments of teacher education, those ossified practices and habits that continue to reify racism and classism in the profession writ large. On a recent virtual book talk attended by one of us, the critical race theorist, activist, and author Ijeoma Oluo opined, “I do not write in order to produce a kinder, more informed white person. *I must insist that you act where you have power*” (Oluo, 2020). In recognition of the immense power we have as teacher educators, we have offered in this article three problematic “monuments” of teacher education and have suggested that where monuments lionize a sole individual, we instead look to the metaphor of wholeness to guide us in service of educational equality. But this requires action. As Carter-Andrews et al. (2018) state, “What is necessary *and* sufficient for programmatic change is not simply a commitment to certain ideals but also enactment of programmatic change” (p. 116). We therefore urge readers to resist the “permeating pace imperative” (Milner, 2008, p. 333) that leaves racism “firmly in place [while] social progress advances at the pace that White people determine is reasonable and

judicious” (López, 2003, p. 84, as cited in Milner, 2008, p. 333) in favor of solid, concrete, discernible movement.

Importantly, the monumental challenges touched on here are the most obvious from our vantage; however, there are undoubtedly others, particularly those unique to specific contexts. Through this article, we hope to both continue decades-long conversations regarding teacher education and to begin the work of reconstitution. Although reconstitution implies a loss of what once was, Allen (2004) reminds us that it is fundamentally “an opportunity for weaving a new social fabric in which to clothe ourselves” (p. 24). If teacher education itself is in a moment of reconstitution, we ask, what sort of fabric shall we use to remake ourselves?

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